

Rc. 9

Price 6d.

# THE CHILD-HEALER

2



By GEORGE H. R. DABBS, M.D.



THE  
CHILD-HEALER:

BY

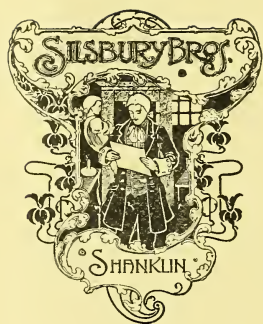
GEORGE H. R. DABBS,  
M. D.

WITH FRONTISPIECE BY MISS LISA STILLMAN.

---

SHANKLIN, I. W. :  
SILSBURY BROS., PRINTERS & PUBLISHERS,  
HIGH STREET.







Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2015

<https://archive.org/details/b22449322>

DEDICATED  
TO  
MADAME JULIA SCARAMANGA,  
WHOSE GRACIOUS BOUNTY IN THE GIFT OF THE  
SCIO HOUSE HOSPITAL FOR CHILDREN,  
AT SHANKLIN,  
LINKS HER NAME, FOR EVER, IN OUR ESTEEM,  
WITH THE TITLE OF THIS  
STORY.

## CONTENTS.

---

CHAPTER I.	...	...	...	LIGHT.
CHAPTER II.	...	...	...	FOUND.
CHAPTER III.	...	...	...	DIVINATION.
CHAPTER IV.	...	...	...	À RIVERDERLA.
CHAPTER V.	...	...	...	A GOLDEN DAY.
CHAPTER VI.	...	...	...	COMRADES.
CHAPTER VII.	...	...	...	FLIGHT.



## PROEM.

---

AS THE CHILD PASSED THE STEPS OF THE THRONE AND BOWED LOW BEFORE THE DEITY, GOD SAW UPON HIS FACE A SADNESS THAT SUBDUED THE JOY OF HEAVEN. AND THE CHILD, FALLING PRONE, WAITED ; AND THE VOICE OF THE DEITY SPAKE TO HIM. "RETURN TO EARTH," SAID THE TENDER VOICE, "FOR YET SEVEN EARTHLY DAYS. THY HEART IS FULL OF PAIN IN THAT THOU KNOWEST, BY BRIEF CELESTIAL EXPERIENCE, THAT THOU COULD'ST LIGHTEN THE LIVES OF LITTLE EARTHLY CHILDREN WERE THE OPPORTUNITY THINE ONCE MORE. BE THEIR CHILD-HEALER FOR THOSE EARTHLY DAYS, AND THEN RETURN TO MY BOSOM AS THY KINGDOM."





# THE CHILD-HEALER.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### LIGHT.

The sleepy hours went forward to the meeting-place of Morn, and the Child stretched his aching limbs, and wondered where he was. And just then Constable Porson of the L. division of police turned his lanthorn out, and leant against the wall of the warehouse to have an anxious think. And the Child rose and joined him. And Constable Porson gave a great start, and then was guilty of a greater smile as the Child said to him "Don't be frightened, sir," and Constable Porson just managed to reply "I'll try not to be," when he found a laugh coming so far up his throat that he had to cough to get rid of it. And the Child's next question set Constable Porson starting in real earnest, for what should the Child say but just what Constable Porson was thinking about, and his question was: "I wonder how little Mary is, and if she has slept well—shall I go and see?" And Constable Porson was so astonished that he simply said "I wish you would," and lo! the Child was gone. And Porson took a deep breath or two just to steady his reason, and said to himself: "I fancy I must be dreaming—let's see;" and he walked to where the Child had come from, and saw where the Child had laid down, and just then Big Ben tolled "five," and, looking across Westminster Bridge he could see the Child shimmering along like a weird wave of light, and he was more and more puzzled. "Surely it *was* a boy as spoke to me," he said to himself. "Yes, yes, he's turned round, and has waved to me,

and kissed his hand. Well, well! I am most habsolutely blowed, and that's a fact."

And then a wayfarer passed, and wished him "Good morning," and then a lonely woman bade him "Good day," and then the life of the great city seemed to turn in its sleep and grow restless as the house-sparrows were, and the visor of the Night was suddenly lifted from the whole world. And the soul of anxious Constable Porson throbbed with delight as the golden voice of the Child whispered to him—"Mary is better. I have seen her, and kissed her. She will soon be well. Good-bye, friend." And the Child would have gone from him, but Constable Porson detained the Child, and said to him: "Don't go—you do me good. I want to hear more—how did you know about her? How did you find her? Who was with her? Did she ask for me?"

And the Child replied: "She was asleep. I did not disturb her. There is no medicine on earth like rest. You are a good and kind man to the poor—you have a pitiful, beautiful soul—you are one of the *few*, Constable Porson of the L. division. I watched you all night before I went to sleep. You were kind to little children, and good to many, and I said I would be kind to you, and my friendship is worth having. But you must move little Mary from that dreadful house, and you must tell your landlord not to break the laws of God by living on the proceeds of iniquity. The drainage of it is abominable. I will tell your landlord; you would not say all I shall say."

"Yes, yes," poor puzzled Porson expostulated, "but who are you, Sir? What's your name? How do you know all these things?"

"I serve my Master," said the Child; "We shall meet again. Good-bye for a little while." And then Constable Porson, for some conveyed reason, did not detain the Child, but only watched

him. Again he saw him winnowing his way across the bridge with that spiritual fleetness that was so full of certainty, and yet almost suggested repose. He saw him stop midway, and clamber on to one of the balustrades, and search the light-giving East with his beautiful eyes, and then, an instant after, he was gone, and poor Constable Porson seemed to feel he had been entertaining an Angel unawares—as he had. And he regretted that he had left so much unsaid.

And the Child was happy in his loneliness, yet lonely he was doomed to be and remain, as he knew by the spirit-voice within that told him so. Perhaps you would like to know a little more about the nameless Child: how he appeared, and what he looked like, and in what fashion he was clothed? I can only tell you he was undescribable, and that his clothing seemed part of him, as his beauty was his own. You could not have passed him without knowing him again if you should see him once more. Nay! you could not meet him once without desiring to meet him again, and being glad if you did so. He was like no other Child—he was Truth and Beauty, Purity and Courage, Mercy and Pity personified and complete. And yet a Child and only a Child withal. He was the very epitome of courtesy, and the commonest man or woman knew him to be something unusual, and instinctively made way for him to pass.

And now he is knocking at the door of the great Vestryman of the District—Mr. Bounce, everyone knows Mr. Bounce—and to the “Not at home” of the slatternly domestic he is smilingly replying “No fibs, Jane, I know he is at home, and I must see him” till Jane saying “Well, I never!” hurries off to find the latent Bounce. And that soon-discovered parochial dignitary angrily demands his business, and the Child replies: “Come outside and I will tell you;” and, as Bounce said afterwards, “the boy’s invite was almost a

command." And so Bounce and the Child had their talk outside. And the Child said to Bounce "before," as Bounce said, "he could get in a word edgeways," "I have come to talk to you about little Mary Porson. She lives in one of your tenements, and I want to tell you, you are a very wicked man."

"Here, stow that," Bounce stuttered, "who are you? I should like to know! I'll give you in charge in a minute, do you know who I am?"

"Perfectly well," said the imperturbable Child; "you are a farmer of infamous houses, and I want to tell you that it is not the way to get to Heaven to quote texts in Chapel on Sundays while you poison the poor every day and all day of every night and day of the week. I have told Constable Porson to leave the house, and I hope he will do so. But if Mary dies you will be her murderer, and my Master has sent me to tell you this." And as poor Bounce said to his corpulent wife that morning when apoplectically adjusting his gaiters "the young Dook was gone afore you could squint." But what he had said worried Bounce for all that.

And when Constable Porson came home to breakfast who should be sitting with his wife but the Child—and the Child smiled at him and said: "I told you we should meet again, and here I am; and I am waiting for Mr. Bounce. I am sure he will come soon for I have seen him. And Mrs. Porson has asked me to breakfast too, and here you are, and now I will say grace, and then we can eat and talk." And the Child bent down his golden head, and said: "Thy blessing on our banquet, dear Lord," and Porson smiled aloud "Banquet, sir? I wish it was."

"And so it is," the Child declared. "No banquet like it—enough to eat and drink, and grateful hearts for what the Giver sends—what more do we need?" And somehow everything at that common breakfast tasted so extremely good, and the Child's golden

voice took entire dominion of all the ordinary talk ; he discoursed of trees and birds, and of all the beauty in the commonest things. And then he cleaned out the cage of the canary, and the canary sat on his shoulder while he did it ; and then the savage new grey parrot, only just imported by Porson's brother ; and the Child put his hand right into the cage, and took it out, and cleaned its disreputable feet, and gave it a bath, and made it happy, and put it back again, while open-eyed wonder glared in Constable Porson's eye. And then into the sick room went the Child, and next out to the street, returning with flowers and green boughs, with which he covered up the garish wall-pattern where is the bad seed of worse dreams to the delirious brain, and let into the room air and light, and dragged out, almost noiselessly, bits of bad carpet, and soiled curtains, and drew the bed out of its wall-hole, and into the centre of the room. And then whispered to Mary, and she woke.

"Ah ! I've bin dreamin' about you," she said.

"I know you have," answered the Child. "Now drink a little milk, dear, and then dream again."

And poor old Porson, almost bursting his belt asunder with emotion, asked "Did she know me, sir ?"

"Yes," the Child said, "she knew you well enough."

"Thank God," blubbered poor Constable Porson, and gave his wife a kiss that might have woke the dead ! And then the Child cleared the room. His authority was in his presence ; no one questioned it at all.

And next came Bounce on high stilts of disdain, and he saw the Child, and quavered out an apology, as the Child raised his finger, in protest against his high voice, and loud way of speech. He had not come for that though : he had come to bluster, but had subdued his evil transports when those luminous eyes had fixed him. Still he did nothing, and went away harshly whispering that he would do



nothing. And the Child never moved, or spoke, but when he was gone, said, as if to himself, "Poor Mr. Bounce! How sorry he will be—by and bye!"

And Porson, looking at the Child, ventured to ask what they should do now. And the Child said: "I hoped he would have done right, and have been sorry. You must borrow the Ambulance, and I will go with you to another place."

"But no house will take us in, sir."

"Where I can go you can come," said the Child. "Obey—please;" and a strange light came for just an electric instant into the eyes of the Child.

And by and bye they pushed the little Ambulance behind the Child who led them into a near country place, where made of leaves was a sheltering tent, and, made of heather, an ample bed. And the Child was sitting on the grass, and looking out at the sky, and Mary was sleeping peacefully on her heather bed, and Mrs. Porson bustling round collecting things for their need, and Porson had gone back to duty with a big lump in his throat, after the Child had said to him "Have faith, and go to your duty—all will be well."

And that night when Constable Porson of the L. division was pacing his beat with weary limbs, and thinking of his only little Mary out there in the dark, there came to him a sense of peace in the thought of the Child being with her. And he could not fix the Child; he seemed to have grown out of the air, and come like a spirit. Poor Constable Porson: you are not the most unhappy man in London. Nay! there is one called Bounce who is far more unhappy for he is groaning by the bedside of his only son—struck down suddenly by some fell disease, and apparently dying. And Bounce, the intractable, is beating his breast, and saying "O Lord, O Lord—spare him—spare me" and—the Child is standing by the doorstep, and is knocking at the door.

## CHAPTER II.

---

### FOUND.

An hour afterwards the Child left Mr. Bounce's house, and if I know the face of the Child (and I think I do know it) the glory-golden Child had been weeping. But you could tell by looking up at the blinds that the worst had not happened, and that poor Bounce had been so far saved the sorrow of separation from one he really and truly loved. And the Child must have been thinking of Bounce as he walked, for you might have heard him say if you had been near enough, "I hope he will abide by his promise, and keep his word; another time I might be too late." And then, as he went by a belated flower-barrow he bought a lot of weary violets, and as he paid for them, and the stall-keeper happened to glance at them again he said: "Lor, sir, they look twice as large, and a heap more beautiful in your hands; you're my first customer, and I've had such a bad day."

"Have you?" said the Child. "And you are only half well either, and it is *so* important that you should be quite well—is it not? There; I touch your hand with my hand; it is all right now—eh? And I will blow a kiss to your flowers, and you will sell them before long."

And then the Child moved away among the crowd, and the flower-seller's customers became so many of a sudden that he had not time to watch his benefactor any more. And the Child, as he crossed the street became aware that a woman was following him, and he turned on the pavement, and she stopped, and said to him: "How beautiful you are; I want to look at you; you do me good; there is little enough that is good in me now-a-days, but you are like a breath of lime-blossom; let me look at you—do."



And the Child replied to her "Let me change the raiment that hides your beautiful soiled soul, let me give you back the peace you once knew of, Agatha" (and at the name she shuddered), "let all this nightmare pass away, and the true old life make forfeit of this new false existence—will you?"

"Yes," she faltered, and he held out his hand, and she clasped it, and on the instant the wondrous change had come to her that he spoke of, and he smiled, and thrilled her through and through by saying "And now you shall come and nurse little Mary, and when she is well, I will find you other work to do—noble work, and when I am gone you will remember me, and will still continue to do good."

And so she followed him beneath the shining stars to where the little girl lay on her heather couch, and he—breaking through the boughs like light—lifted the weary, sleeping mother, and bade her go to rest near by while Agatha should watch by Mary's side. And all night long the spiritualised Agatha did duty while he lay near by with open, dream-dipt eyes, and communed with the unsleeping and unsullied Dark.

And in the morning Porson came and told him the workmen were at work in the Terrace of Despair, and that Bounce was there directing them with feverish haste. And then the Child fell asleep with a happy smile upon his lips. And while he slept Agatha and the Porsons talked of him in whispers, and wondered who he was. And their wonder grew as they watched him sleeping, but their Faith deepened as their wonder grew. And when Mary woke, and held her hands and arms out to her father, he, in such haste was he to reach her, stumbled over the sleeping Child so that he woke, and rubbed his eyes, as was his wont. And then poor Porson was "so sorry" and the Child laughed, and said: "I have slept long enough—kiss Mary—she is nearly well you see. I told you she should

soon be so."

And Porson kept silence for he dared not speak ; his heart was over-full.

And soon after the Child, wishing them good-bye for a little while, and having in some mysterious way provided for their needs so that they wanted nothing, and kissing Agatha, and whispering to her "Remember : I trust you," the Child went out of the tent of leaves, parting the boughs back as he went, and when he had reached the higher ground, turned back, and waved his hand to them, and was lost to sight for a short space of earthly time.

But though they have lost him we must follow him, for his sojourn here is brief, and all he does we must know.

The Child was walking very fast for him, for usually he seemed to saunter with a purpose, rather than walk with any haste, but now he was hasting, and his face had lost the usual aspect of dream-certainty in which that face seemed to live. But there was no tiring the Child—his limbs seemed steel-knit against all ordinary or casual fatigue, and yet he slept and rested very little. And presently in a large and crowded street he stopped, and looked up and down, as if searching for some one or something. And soon he spied the poor other one he was looking for, and getting near him in the press of people said "Well, Johnny, how goes it to-day?"

"Bad," little Johnny replied, "and shan't I get a beating neither to-night. Oh my, they beat me last night cruel because I was sixpence short, and said if I was short again to-night they'd 'alf kill me—so if I don't earn enough by dark I'm agoin' to stay out, and chance the night under the bridge."

"Poor Johnny," the Child, sighing, said; "and did they beat you very badly, dear?"

"Oh, shockin' ; look at my legs—there—see them marks, and I'm that sore—" and just then Johnny began to tremble, and the

Child, looking up, noticed a common, evil-faced man coming their way, who came close up to them, and clutched Johnny by the arm, and hissed in his ear "Idlin', you varmint—idlin' again—wait till I gets you at home." But now the Child interposed, and the man with a scream, dropped the boy's arm, and, turning on the Child, said: "Did you strike me then?"

And the Child answered "No; I only touched your coat—like this——"

"Like that—don't do that again or I'll know why," and the man's face paled about the lips as the Child frowned on him and said: "Little Johnny will never go back to you any more; he is a stolen child, and you know it. Stay there till we are gone," and the man with livid lips of impotent anger growled: "Who are you—sir?" and the 'Sir' came out with an effort, but the Child only replied "No matter who I am, or what I am—you cannot move till I release you by and bye, by and bye when Johnny and I are out of danger of being followed. Come, Johnny," and Johnny took the Child's hand, and they spun in and out among the crowd, just as a light may dance on water in the dark—and the crowd was dark to the man watching them, who soon felt the gyves of restraint moved from his fettered limbs, and rose and followed them, as he thought, with bitter fearful language on his tongue, and black anger in his heart. But they were a long way off by then, and Johnny was feeling better, and walking well, and the Child was taking him home into the ambrosial country, and every now and then Johnny slept a little, and, when he woke, he and the Child were miles and miles nearer home, till at last Johnny began to recollect the gates, and the by-ways, and side-lanes, and clapped his hands with joy to think he was so nearly home. And, at last, he fell once more to sleep, and the Child went on alone to where a sad and lonely lady was in a fair garden, looking with sad-weary eyes to the road whence

he was coming towards her. And as he reached the gate he stopped, and looked at her, and she was steeped, as it were, in the glory of his smile, and against all sorrow in her weary heart, smiled too, and instinctively opened the gate for him.

And he touched her hand with his lips, and said: "Come with me," and she went without a word of hesitation or remonstrance, or even an accent of surprise. And, as they journeyed on together, choosing always the soft, grassy side-path, he said to her as though taking up the thread of thought that was never unwoven quite in the shuttle of her brain: "Should you know him again?" And she replied "Know him! my only one—my beautiful boy—should I *know* him again?" And he answered "He is there—behind the oak-tree—in the shade—asleep—sit down beside him till he wakes. I cannot come for I must wait and watch for both your sakes." And he heard her murmuring "O God! I thank Thee: my own, my precious one restored to me—after all these weary days." But the Child shaded his eyes looking down the road, and presently, with hasting steps he saw the child-stealer coming, and there were with him another man and a woman—a cruel, pitiless woman, and they were saying as they came along "We must be in time for they must have come by road," and as they turned the corner of the road the Child leaped from the stile, and stood before them. And they stopped of a sudden, and the man we have known before said to the Child:

"You're the young thief as took Johnny away to-day from me in Endell Street."

"Yes," the Child answered. "I did."

"And where is he now?" shrieked the woman.

"Ay—where is he now?" roared the second man.

And the Child replied "I will show you;" and just then mother and son came from behind the oak-tree—her arm about his neck—

her kisses devouring him—but the boy seeing his old tormentors, screamed, and stood still and trembled.

But the Child opened wide the gate, and said to them “Pass on, beloved—ye are safe in the shelter of my protection—these cannot harm you,” and they did as he bade them do, and still the woman and the two men did not move, and did not speak. And the Child went up to them, and touched them, each one, on the forehead, and said : “Forget,” and they started as one may start from deep sleep, and looked around, and seemed dazed and puzzled as to where they were. And then the Child smiling on them uttered these words :—“Behold ye were vile but ye are vile no more. The new life has touched you. Return and work and live honestly as once ye did before this bad time came.”

And one of them answered “Yes, Master ; but where are we ?”

And the Child took him by the hand who spoke, and said to the others “Come with me where I am going,” and they followed him with heads erect, and a new strange expectancy. And they traversed once more the weary road which Johnny and he had travelled, and he fed them by the roadside as the evening fell, and gave them sleep as Night descended, and woke them when it was just daylight, and behold ! they were once more in the great City, and they gazed at his mysterious, beautiful countenance, and the woman, in an awed whisper asked him what they should do now. And he, half anticipating her query, said to her “Sister ! while you have slept I have given you all new raiment, and here is money enough till you shall get honest work. This day is for you all the new Birth : do not fail me, for, if you fail me, I shall know.”

And the woman answered “We will never fail thee.”

“Never, never ;” spoke the men in one breath.

“And so comes another Day,” said the Child, “and my days are few, and the hours beat on for me as for you.”

And the woman, gazing steadfastly into his eyes, said to him “ Who are you, sir ? and why have you helped us so much who had so little, and were so unworthy of your aid ? ” But he only smiled at her, and waved them to the City beneath them, and they passed on at his behest, and never looked behind them any more.

And so commenced the third day in the short second earthly life of the Child, and, as he gazed after them, he seemed satisfied and happy.

And when the sun had risen a little higher, and little Mary awoke, he was at her side, and Agatha was kissing his hands. And outside the leafy bower the bees were humming and Nature was at work in her old, eternal, changeless, and untiring way.





## CHAPTER III.

---

### DIVINATION.

This was Wednesday of the wonderful week of the Child's second birth and second sojourn upon earth.

And when he had prayed with Agatha, and Mary, and Mary's mother, he said gently to them "I am going away again for a whole day from my dear ones, and when I return we shall all be able to go back to Westminster, and I will guide you there as I guided you here, and Mary will be well, and we shall be happy once more."

And they dwelt on all he said, and listened to the lifted lilt of his immemorial voice as though it were of another music of earthly words, with tones of tenderness inside its meaning that they had never heard before, that they knew of some strange certainty that they should not hear often again. And Agatha went with him when he moved away across the grass-land to the hiding hill beyond, thinking and feeling that he must not, at first, go quite alone, and desiring to be with him for a space by some indeterminate instinct of desire that overmastered argument and foreshortened explanation. And he seemed to know she had thought to come with him for a little while, and he did not say to her "Come" but he looked into her eyes, and they lightened with love—love of the purest, holiest, most utterly self-sacrificing! And they wandered forth into the passionate inviting land of that supernal summer dawn, and the beauty of it almost took her breath away. And the Child smiled at her vivid satisfaction, but said through his smiles "I know a Land to which this beauty is a mere painted scene," and she asked him where that Land might be—"Where the sea sobs not," he replied, and she was quiet by instinctive acceptance of tender



rebuke in that reply. And, as they reached the very verge of distance that was for them the last foothold of vision that still revealed Mary's little bower, Agatha spoke and said: "I do not know your name. I only know the beauty of your shining face, the glory of your loving kindness. I was a sinner, but I was deceived. My boy was taken to God, my little girl was sent by kind friends to a Blind School. I shall never again see the one, and the other will never see me. I tell you this that you may know me of your pity, and pity me of your great love." And before the Child replied, he turned to the East, and his eyes were filled with tears, and his lips moved and murmured "Poor mother—it is she indeed!" And then he said; "I know your sorrow, Agatha, I know your late shame, but I know likewise the tender Father who forgives you all that is gone past. And I will go to-day, and will talk to your blind baby as though she were my own little sister—as she may be—" said the Child with a strange catch in his voice, "and—you need not speak—I know where to find her, never fear for me—and—yes, yes—I know her name "little Ruth," well named indeed, for little ruth had her bad father when he forsook her, and left you. And now go back to Mary, my Agatha, and I will return to you, and will tell you of your blind little one, and she shall love you as the dove loves its nest."

And he went forward with his gliding, springing tread, straight for the mute high-road that wound like a ribband between the shading and leaf-laden trees, while Agatha, looking after him, murmured as though in her sleep: "I do not mourn for my son any more now that I have seen you. For you have taken the sting from death—you have given to remembrance the victory of peace."

\*

\*

\*

\*

It was the day of the great Bazaar for the Blind School, and

all London was there to help by selling or buying. Certain of the girls and boys of the School who could be trusted by blind intuition to sell flowers and programmes were allowed to do so. The scene was at its very zenith, and there was a lull in the almost ceaseless "turns" of the Concert. At that moment from behind one of the stalls was heard the first prelude of what was evidently a forthcoming song—the strings of a harp were vibrating to a Master's touch! And then, and with a sudden, searching and absolutely arresting effect the voice followed. What was the song? None knew it; no one could tell. Evidently it was a boy's voice but what a voice to be sure! And its effect was to stay the feet in silence, and not to cause a rush (as might have been expected) to its nest behind the stalls. For there came a sudden and universal acceptance of silence as alone compatible with the occasion. And you could see on the faces of all a sort of artistic anxiety lest a note should be lost or a word go unheard. And its effect was strangely italicised by one incident. Right up in the roof a workman, standing on one of the girders, at a giddy height, was trying to manipulate and set right some error in a window, which was not remediable by the ordinary pulley, for some reason or other. As he stood there with one arm drawn back to strike the obdurate frame of the sill, and with his other arm stretched out for support against the window, the first note of the Song touched his consciousness, and till the Song ceased his hypnotised muscles held his outdrawn arm at the very limit of its extension. And his shadow thrown on the blind at the other side of the building made an almost perfect Cross. It was a strange contribution to the mysticism of the scene. And when the Song ceased without finishing (as it did), one little blind child was heard to say to another "That is the song my own brother sings in Heaven," and as she spoke the Singer came towards her. And the glory of his count-

enance was as a revelation, and the beauty of his face and form eclipsed belief, and the stupefied beholders gazed, and wondered. And the Child, taking little Ruth by the hand, wandered from group to group of people, and ever, as he held out his hand, the gold and silver coins were rained into that shining palm, as into his companion's little apron, held out instinctively to receive them; till by and bye, and right in the centre of the building, he stopped, and some one bringing him the harp once more, again he touched the strings, and once again he sang. And Time stood still and listened to the mighty message that fulfilled Eternity! And it was noted and spoken of afterwards that by some consentaneous attraction all the blind children were grouped about him, that when the refrain bore itself back to the initial theme, and became a measure of glorified repetition those afflicted ones alone knew it, alone repeated and sang it. Yes; and no one else even dared attempt to sing it, that was the strange thing. And if I do not try to be either its interpreter or paraphrasist, it is because it moved in a world of melody, and was interpenetrated by a language of accord that gave to it a kind of new literature of words as of music. It was unrepeatable, unforgettable, and yet wholly unknown. And men and women "of the world" as they are called, were hushed by it into reverence, stung by it into gifts they never before dreamt of giving, and were made at once kinder, and poorer, and happier by its influence.

But no tension holds too long; there must come a slackening of ever so tight and stretched a string, and tears are to nerve-strings as moisture to other strings, and the slackening is salvation now and then. It was now. But the Child seemed quite radiantly happy, and moved about from stall to stall with his attendant, if blind, apostolic children-followers, and wherever he went or wherever he lingered, the receipt of custom grew, and the Bazaar

broadened along the path of success in quite a wonderful way. And little Ruth talked to him, and told him all her life, and all her happiness, and he, finding in her brain the tiny seed of perfect time and tune, asked of one of the rich Governors who spoke to him, and thanked him for his great help, if little Ruth might be trained to music in the prospect of gaining a subsequent livelihood by the tuning of pianos, and the Governor said he would 'see to it,' and the Child knew this as that reserve of good intent in a good man which was almost better than a hasty promise would have been. And then, the time growing short, the Child took little Ruth aside, and talked to her, and what he said to her I cannot tell you, but I know that before he left her she was full of a great, great happiness which she could not explain, and did not desire to explain. And before the Bazaar quite closed the Child touched the harp for the third and last time, and his voice soared upward as all that crowd's one voice followed him in the tender words of "Lead, kindly light," and then—after an instant's pause—and no one doubted what was coming next—one sanctified verse of "Abide with Me," closed the work of the afternoon.

Everything was sold; there was no reason to stay longer, and as the crowd filed out behind the Child the voice of another child spoke to his rich mother, and said of him "He will always be in my most bootiful, bootiful dreams, Mummy," and our Child turned round on the instant, blew him a kiss, and was gone!

## CHAPTER IV.

---

### A RIVERDERLA.

Early next day might have been seen the old procession of two days before, slowly trailing back to Westminster, but what a change in all there had been worked in those two days. The fresh country air had banished the fever from little Mary's eyes; the newer life had taken the haggard stain of Care from the cheeks of Agatha; the fresher hope had been to Mary's mother as a drop of new youth in the over-full cup of recent sorrow; while Constable Porson walked with head erect behind the Child, and with reverend, grateful gaze followed where he led.

And how swiftly he moved, and how all made way for him to be sure! And to every poor child he met, he whispered something, and each one that listened stood transfixed with joy that only half believed and yet did not disbelieve. And the children ran (to whom he whispered) to tell other children, and these went shouting out of earshot to tell more children, and only little Mary knew what he had said to these little ones, for only to her had he confided his great secret beforehand.

And when Mary was in bed, the Child, taking Agatha by the hand, went with her to a distant part of that great London whose brick-dust is blotting out every green field, and whose mighty wail of life is invading the very stars. And as they walked, he spoke to her solemnly of the life around them and, as she, too amazed to reply, could only listen, he went on to describe the faults, the difficulties against betterment, the moral bars to childhood's truer understanding which pervaded the world of

complexity through which they moved. He told her the religion of Fear was the creed of Despair, that where God's Love should be preached and spoken and taught, men—good men, but misguided men—finding no satisfaction in any righting of error which did not involve a judgment of pains and penalties, filled the minds of little children with the idea of an implacable God; that this supposed severity of the Deity was further reflected in the tendency to imitate the invented punishments of so distorted a God by human customs and by human tribunals; that as little children grew up to think of the price in pain of each aberration of childhood, so, the thoughts of children broadening into the opinions of graver men, kept alive the despairing evangel of the pain that perverts mercy, and the judgment that justifies revenge. And from such a creed come the punishments meted out to little children, the darkness that imitates and intensifies fear, the shocking stripes of suffering laid on with a religious fervour that sometimes forgets all pity—the rehearsal by men, as it were, in lack of merciful suspense, of that merciless Hereafter that makes God almost a shame, and His pity a mockery and by-word.

And Agatha listened, and at last said: "Alas! I thought in this way; I was so trained; I taught my babies the religion of Fear."

"I know it," the Child replied, "and it is because you will have much to do with afflicted children in your future here, that I want you to reconsider all that you have been told and taught."

And then the Child repeated what he had before said with glowing, ecstatic insistence, and prophetic warning in his tenderest words. And Agatha treasured those words, and put them by for the seed-time ahead.



And now they had reached their destination, the great Hospital for Little Children, and it was visiting day, and they filed in with the rest, and went from ward to ward, seeing, pitying, ministering. But Agatha, as was her wont with him, kept silence while he communed with all those he seemed to know so well beforehand. And they appeared to have expected him, and from that wonderful pocket of his he seemed to bring fruit and pictures and surprises of all sorts, to each some appropriate thing. And as he was passing one little bed with a screen round it, he heard weeping from the other side of it, and going there alone, he took by the hand a widow woman, who looked up at him quickly and said: "Oh, Sir—is there no hope for me? She is all I have in this weary world."

And the Child, kneeling first and offering up ever so brief a prayer, touched the eyelids of the dying child, and then moved on, saying to the poor mother—"Have hope and all may be well," and though the little one seemed to be as he had found her, yet that mother's faith began to flow back once more to Hope's eternal shore.

And the Child seemed to know every other child in that vast Hospital; by some he sat down, with others he played, to all he was welcome. And Agatha marvelled, and kept her peace till, by and bye, one of the nurses, a hallowed, holy little woman, said to her: "Did that beautiful boy come with you?"

"Yes," Agatha replied.

"And who is he?" the nurse asked.

"I cannot tell you for I do not know. He came into my life but three days ago. I have never heard his name. I know nothing of him save that he is too good and too beautiful to be of this earth."

And at that very instant the Child joined them, and said to her who



had enquired of Agatha about him, "You are Lucille, are you not? Little Lucille from the far Auvergne country, little Lucille who was lost and found, and whom a good and great lady taught to help the sick and the suffering. And I come too from a far-away Land, and there is no one in all this vast City who knows me, but there is no one who I do not know. And now, my Lucille, I want to sing to your little ones—may I?"

"Oh yes!" Lucille replied. "There is a piano over there—can you play it?"

"Indeed yes, I can play any instrument," the Child answered. "Do not hush the children—they will be quiet when they hear me sing," And they were quiet. And once more that glorious voice that had enraptured a crowd on the day before penetrated its hearers, though such different hearers, on this day. But the children's silence seemed to have in it a memory—it was the tribute of a misty remembrance to some strains long-lost from earthly consciousness that seemed to hold them spell-bound now. And one little sufferer away in the corner under the picture of "The Childhood of Raleigh"—a little wizened scrap of suffering and pathetic weariness—suddenly and to the intense satisfaction of Lucille, actually went to sleep, a fact of lost consciousness that he had not accomplished successfully for many a weary night and day. And another lying muttering in delirium—where the screen was indeed—suddenly opened her eyes, and looked about her, and held out her arms to the praise-glorified, waiting image of beatified Motherhood at her side. And still the healing Song rolled on with its unearthly cadence of supreme, unresting Rest. And it was more than strange to watch how all the visitors, those who had come to talk to the little patients in whom they were interested, seemed to prefer the song-swept Silence that the children's arrested attention imposed to the usual babbling talk of a visitors'

afternoon.

And there was one great lady there, no greater by nobility of lineage, and nobleness of soul in all England, who had come many a long mile from the central shires only to see her gardener's little son, and she, who had known quite recently the sorrow of bereavement by the death in battle of her one and only boy—turned on the Singer the anguish of her tear-weary eyes, and drank in the marvels of his transcendent Song, and felt strangely at peace. And when he had ceased he went to her, and took her hand most gently, and respectfully, and kissed it, and said to her: "I know your sorrow, madame. I know also his joy. Hope on and faint not by the way. Hope on and trust the shadows to reveal what the garish day conceals."

And the great lady, searching his eyes of light with her pure but weary eyes, thanked him, and asked him to sing once more to please her. And he once more complied. It was a strange and yet a certain song. It was, as it were, a pæan of consummation that had out-distanced Hope, and joined hands with divine certainty. There was no promise in it, but only fulfilment. It left nothing to be fully satisfied for it involved the fullest satisfaction of attained and perfect Peace. And the lady, when she had heard it, knew that all was well, and yet could only bow to the Singer, and look the thanks she could not speak.

And then the Child spoke a long while with Lucille, and heard her story, and was told about her useful life, and blessed her as he went away.

And when he and Agatha had passed into the summer night, he turned away from Westminster, and she followed him unquestioningly. And still his footsteps bore North, and still she followed him. And, by and bye, they came upon a gipsy encampment, and the Child calling in a strange language, was answered at once by a man who

came towards them. And the Child said to him "Christopher, your little one in the Hospital will get well after all."

And the man said: "Bless you Master, for those words; but he can't sleep they say."

"He is asleep now," the Child replied, "I saw him sleeping. I sung him to sleep. But Christopher, when little Chris comes back you must be kinder to him. You have a rough, strange heart, but you do not really understand a little child. Next time you fail to do so he will go to a better Father."

And the gipsy fell at his feet, and kissed them, and said as though the Child were arbiter of life and death—"Give me one more chance, Master;" and the Child smiled assentingly, and passed on.

But even then the Child did not turn his steps towards Mary's mother and little Mary—nay, but still North to where a big house lay sheltered in immemorial trees, backed by a pine-wood, and near a shimmering lake. And the Child pulled the handle of the resounding bell, and a white-haired servitor appeared, and bowed to him as though expecting him. And said the Child: "Here is Agatha. And here Agatha," he continued, "is thy kingdom—the kingdom of lost little children of whom you shall be guardian, and to whom you shall ever be a friend. And here for you and for me, Agatha, is the parting of the ways—'Farewell' is only a human word—there is no farewell, though well may you fare, dear one, in this world; and so doing, and so faring, the next surprising world is sure and safe for you. Be kind to little children, my Agatha, teach them love, and love them as you teach them. And now, and for a space—a short space—we must part; but I am always near you, dear one, and you will remember my words I know, and live as I would have you live. And if you are ever tempted think of the child that is blind, little Ruth, and all will at once be

well with you."

And as Agatha, bowing her head passed in, and the door closed behind her, the Child with star-steadfast eyes was hurrying back to Westminster.



## CHAPTER V.

---

### A GOLDEN DAY.

Next day Constable Porson—having by some strange luck been granted a free day—wheeled Mary into the country once more in a little carriage which the Child had somewhere procured ; and the Child and Mary's mother walked behind them far, far into a somewhat distant and unfrequented country spot. And as they journeyed on Constable Porson, turning to the Child said half-bashfully “Seems to me, Sir, as all the boys and girls in the world are going our way. There's nothing *but* boys and girls and girls and boys. London'll be empty of its children if this goes on.”

And the Child smiled, and said : “I thought the same thing, and we are boys and girls too,” he added with a tender pressure of poor weary-eyed Mrs. Porson's hand, at which she actually blushed.

“Most 'strordinary,” said Porson to himself ; “and how well-behaved they all are, and how anxious they seem to get to where they are going.” And then to a little ragged chap near him Porson questioned—“Whither away, sonny ?”

And the ragged one answered : “Miles away yet, but we shall git there, and everyone's a goin', and there's goin' to be lots to eat, and lots o' swings, and all sorts o' Aunt Sallys', and roundabouts, and music, old man,” said he to Porson (who started at the familiarity with sudden constabulary consciousness), “and everyone's goin' to be well an' happy for one whole day—think o' that, master, one whole day with no care, nor sorrow, no blows, no tears, no anguish in it. Gawd knows if it's all true, but they says it is ; and no one would be so low-down wicked as to kid us all with such a tale as that—would they, mister ?”

And the Child taking the little fellow's hand replied for Porson, "No, Tuppenny, my dear, no one would deceive such a boy as you, such boys as all the other boys, such girls as all the other girls. It is quite, quite true, Tuppenny, quite true. And we are all boys and girls to-day, Tuppenny, and we shall all play together all through the glory of this day right into the golden sunset. Yes, Tuppenny, and we shall all be so happy together."

And then Tuppenny beginning out of his very joy of heart to execute a grave and reverend break-down Porson broadened into an expansive smile, little Mary laughed aloud, and the lilt of laughter and joyousness went as a breeze goes, right onward, and right forward to the "no-one-knew-where." But Tuppenny's remarks had not finished yet, and he confided a little more to the Child as thus: "I say Goldenhair, you seems to know all about this Treat. You seems the sort of hub of this wheel to-day. Now wot I wants to know is one other thing—there's Milly Byles, wot lives in our Court, she ain't walked for months, and she's on ahead walkin' like steam. There's Bobby Ficklin as was burnt last Sunday week when his boozy father tumbled the kettle over his pore legs, he's just behind steppin' out like a recruiting serjeant. There's them deaf and dumb children down in the alley near the river-side, they're comin' along too. There's miles and miles of sick children yesterday all well to-day—how does it come about, Goldenhair, tell me please?"

"Finish all your questions, Tuppenny, and then I'll speak," replied the Child.

"Well then, there's the food—where's it comin' from? Thousands o' children means more thousands o' appetites—where's the food? Who pays for the food? We've brought nothin'. When we was all told in our sleep where to come, we was told to bring nothin' with us but to have faith. I've come on faith, but I'm blessed



if I can eat faith. And I'm 'alf afeared as how some of the children 'll be awful disappointed to-day."

"Oh no," the Child answered. "He who invited you is too rich in grace, and too bountiful in mercy to fail you in any way."

"Must be somethink like a milliner—he must; riches ain't in it—he must be a milliner over and over again. Why Lord love you, Goldenhair, there's acres of children here, or will be when the miles spread out, and there ain't roundabouts in all the world for a quarter of 'em, and as for Aunt Sally's why they'd break the cocoa-nut merchants of the earth to find prizes for 'em when the stick 'its the pipe in the old lady's mouth. Oh dear, oh dear, here's a lark to be sure. Why I can see tents, and roundabouts, and flags on that hill there, and I can hear bands a-playin', and there's crowds and crowds o' children over there, and not a policeman among 'em, and not a teacher, and not a Board school sweep with his broom-full of Rules," added Tuppenny below his breath with bitter and in-sweeping irony of meaning, at which Porson and the Child laughed.

"Yes," the Child said at last, "here we are, and here begins the Carnival of Youth on the green sward of old Time. Get along, Tuppenny, enjoy yourself. There are games and playthings, and plenty to eat of all sorts everywhere. Go and enjoy yourself, my Tuppenny." And Tuppenny turned head over heels nine consecutive times, and with the ninth went clean into the heart of the crowd, and was seen no more for a space.

And Porson and little Mary, now following the Child and Mary's mother, found themselves ascending a stupendous hill of grass and wild-flowers, ever-thronged and ever-happy in its thronging, till at last they stood on the very summit of the hill, and looked down upon that wonderful, and growing crowd of children. It was a very pleasure-hive of unsullied happiness. There was no halt or



stay for one moment in the eternal round of innocent gaiety. Over there the band was playing a well-known air, and you could hear the voices of the thousands nearest its music joining it. Down lower another band was playing dance music, and there were boys and girls footing it as bended branches turn and bend onward and bend back to a changing but prevailing breeze-measure. And as far as you could see, to use that beautiful phrase anew which crept into English speech with the name of Sheridan, "Delight sat basking on the cheek of Toil," for the parents of the children were not omitted in the instinctive hospitality of Sleep's conveyed invitation—and why should they have been? They knew the grinding wheel of life too well, and could appreciate the beauty and truth of that sentence of prayer that fell just then from the lips of the Child, "We thank thee Father of all for this one day's perfect happiness."

And the day glowed into noon, glorified itself into afternoon, and began to know the still distant shadow of the brooding Night. In fact Evening had come upon them all, and with evening an impressive sudden silence. And there, as they looked, on the very point of the enraptured hill, the Child was standing, alone, with head uncovered, and his hand stretched out towards that mighty, understanding multitude of little children. And their own parents seemed to have surrendered to him the duty of direction, the claim of holy chieftainship, the fealty to one that is a human repetition (perhaps) of a divine idea. But how would his voice or his meaning reach them? they asked of one another. But this was a new atmosphere they found, for the hill was, as peopled now by them all, as a closed room for sound, and every word was audible. And first he offered up a tiny, tender, comprehending and comprehended little prayer. He thanked the Giver of the Holiday—he bowed down his head, and paid reverent gratitude to

their Host on behalf of this host of little children. He had said "Come to me," and they had come. That was all, and a great responsive happy sigh came up the hill, and the auburn curls on his glorious head were waved and laved by it ever so gently, ever so tenderly. And then came the Song of Songs, and—though they have forgotten it now—they all knew it then, and its full choral power fell on the Night with arresting majesty—a treble unison of praise that almost reached the listening stars. And down in the meadows the kine were browsing, and over there by the wooded belt of grassland the other Song of Songs, that the river's voice made and had made eloquent so long, was babbling over her eternal bars—that Song that still sings in the ear of the sea as she opens her mighty arms to embrace her at her coming, as she joins melody to majesty and makes of all one unison! And the Child's face was laid against the sunset as you may see a flame beating within a porcelain vase. It was cradled in the baptismal light that yet irradiated it from within, and stood forth a point of fire in that dying evening of a deathless day. And then by some strange meaning, in each child's hand was a palm bough, and before they knew why or wherefore the massed bands were moving away playing a glorious quickstep, and the children were waving their palm boughs, and following in the wake of the music till all had trooped away into the silence and the distance, and the darkness of the night, and only the Child was left alone on the summit of the hill. And there came to him a woman as he sat there, who touched his hand, and he looked up at her. And she said: "Who are you, Sir?"

And he replied, "Why do you ask?"

"Because," she said, "the whole fields are strewn with crutches that the halt and maimed have left behind—because my cripple boy—my own poor little boy—is walking about as well as I am—because—I think I know who you must be."

And then he spoke to her gently, kindly, solemnly. He said : "I am not He who you mean—nay—I am only a disciple. To-day I knew you were watching us, and I knew how you had—without any invitation—thrust your little one into the throng—your castaway comes back to you. And you are sister to my mother, Agatha. You have been hard to her, but God has been kind to you. She has sinned but you have not been sinless. She is repenting by lonely self-sacrifice—you too must repent by greater affluence of charity. And now I must leave you. I have a little friend who awaits me." And she bowed down while he passed on.

And when he had reached the lower land, he stopped, and swung a little, sleeping street-Arab on to his shoulders.

"Tired, Tuppenny?" he asked, and Tuppenny replied, "Ever so sleepy, Goldenhair, but I'm pretty heavy, I specks for you."

But he only said : "Heavy, Tuppenny? No, my little chap, you're as light as Laughter, as gentle as Pity, as sweet as Love. Heavy, Tuppenny? No, no, my boy of boys, you're the most glorious thing under the stars, one of God's children, a burden that all should pray to bear—and bear worthily. Heavy, Tuppenny? Only with sleep, my dreamer of delight. And here we are at your home, and there is a golden keepsake round your little neck for you to remember Goldenhair by, however difficult the world ahead may be, O Tuppenny! for you."

## CHAPTER VI.

---

### COMRADES.

On the next morning very early, the Child spoke to Mary's mother, and said to her, "This is Saturday, and I want you to let little Mary come with me where I wish to take her, and on Sunday at midnight I wish you to come to your husband's beat: and where I first met dear Constable Porson, I will restore Mary to you. For I must soon now leave you all, my dear ones, your humble house has been my cherished earthly abode, and I shall never forget, and you will always remember."

And without hesitation or doubt Mary's mother said to Mary—"Go with him," and hand in hand they went forth together.

And as they journeyed onward, the Child said to little Mary: "I am your host for to-day and for to-morrow, and whatever you wish most I will show you."

"Show me the sea," the little one replied; and the Child, seeming pleased at her choice, moved onward to the South country by strange paths and ways wherein and whereby little Mary often slept, and yet was never weary. And in a brief space of time, he said to her: "Listen," and she heard the roar of the great waters in the distance, and grew pale, and clung to him in fear, and he, so well understanding her alarm, and so accurately and truly interpreting her anxiety, poised her on his shoulder, and said: "Look—what do you see?"

And little Mary replied, "A shining light where many birds are hovering, and great ships are passing by."

And he answered to her. "That is the sea," and she was silent for a space, till at last, loosening her hold on his hand he knew that wonder had displaced fear, and that her silence but increased

that wonder. And then he told her of the sea, and told her of the Land where that sea shall be no more. And by and bye they reached the verge of the shore, and found the sea-shells, and Mary was full of quick delight at the secrets that were hummed into her ear, and ever and again she placed the shells of different sizes against her cheek, and listened to their varied sounds. And he showed her all the wonders of the stagnant sea-pools, the myriad life that lay mirrored there, the changes and variety of all he showed her too. And then unmooring a tiny boat, and carrying her in his arms, he rowed her far, far out towards the lifted line of waters that was the end (for her) of vision. And ships passed going homewards, and ships passed going outward bound, and she learnt the pulse, and heaving life, of that vast heart of the world that buoyed them on its current, and seemed so impassive, so eternal, and might seem (she was sure), so pitiless, and relentless too. And then her changing fancies pined for other scenes, and he, leaning down to listen to her blushing wish, caught the words—"Wild flowers," and soon they had landed, and were mounting with clever-clinging steps the steep-rising land, and ere little Mary had time to feel tired, he was showing her the secrets of the woods, the hidden riddle of the flower-crannies, the hiding put-away beauties of the babbling little brook that rose so many miles away in the silence-breaking forest-world, a tiny child of that silence, never, as little Mary said "growing very much after all," and soon joining its child-music to the burden of the deliberate and resounding main.

And when he had decked her with flowers, and had gathered quite a quantity besides, he said: "In a cottage near here is some one I want you to know, Mary." And Mary answered, "Yes: let me know her."

And parting the boughs and briars on one side, they were soon

standing by the cot of a child, wheeled out into the saving and restoring sunshine, and the Child was holding her hand in his and saying. "You gave your life for your little sister—she would have been killed but you saved her by losing your own limbs, and nearly your own life. And so I have come to you, little weary, suffering Judith—Judith of the brave heart."

And Judith said: "And I have been expecting you. I knew that you would come, because the Dream told me so. And the Dream said this: 'If you were well again your self-sacrifice would not be believed, so you must bear your Cross that others may see and take up theirs aright.' And I am happy so that you are satisfied."

And little Mary threw her arms round Judith's neck, and in the eyes of the Child two big tears gathered, and then rolled down his cheeks, and he did not brush them away. Then taking from his breast a tiny cross he pinned it to her little dress, and said: "Behold! I give you Peace. And peace is better for you perhaps than even health, and I give you the blessing of my heavenly kiss straight from the lips of the great and just and far-seeing God." And he kissed her on the eyes, and the light of that kiss faded never out of her eyes in all her long pilgrimage.

And then Mary told Judith of her illness, and of how the Child had saved her, and cared for her; and told her too of the mighty mission of joy to children which his gift had bestowed on thousands and thousands of poor children only yesterday. And told her too of little Tuppenny, and of all he had said, and feared of disappointment, and of the absolute reversal of these fears. And said at last to Judith, "And we don't know even his name, or who he is, or where he comes from, or where he is going."

And Judith said: "Nor do I know who he is, but I do know where he is going."



And the Child smiled at her, and Judith smiled back at him, and little Mary found her mind wandering in some strange way to the story of Christ and Lazarus, and of the secret Lazarus kept when all the neighbours would have had him speak.

And then with many words of tender import they parted from Judith. And Mary being sleepy, the Child carried her, and when she awoke they were in London once more, and it was evening. And they passed through the thickest and lowest parts of the great city in its Saturday night turmoil of unceasing competition and care. And as they stood—Mary being uncertain of what next she wanted to see—at the busy corner of a surging street they heard two children talking about yesterday, and the little ones said to one another that they had never had or known such a day, that all the cripples they knew were well or seemed well, that in each child's little pocket when they reached home they had found a golden coin, that their palm branches were hung up in their city homes "like the rosemary of remembrance" (the Child said to Mary), but the children simply called them "somethin' to remember it all by."

"And," exclaimed one of the children, looking suddenly round, "there he is as did it." And then they came close to the Child, and looked up at him, and he smiled down on them.

And Mary asked the children what they would like to do that evening, and if they would care to come with her and the Child, and enjoy themselves somewhere. And both children clapped their hands, and exclaimed together, "Circus—there's a big one near here agoon' on now;" and the Child, acquiescing, they were soon inside the travelling tent, and enjoying the show.

But it was not all pleasure that the little children had led them to, for the Child divined in an instant that here was a poor performing child to whom his invitation had not come. As she

bounded past him on her trained horse something happened, and she fell, and her performance was spoilt; and though the ring-master seemed kind to her before the public gaze, behind the tent he was commencing to be quite otherwise, and his whip was raised as he told her she must go back, and do it all again. But then he looked round, and saw the Child, and the Child took him on one side. and spoke to him—but what he said I know not, yet this I do know that the little one took off her dress and spangles, and joined Mary, and the others very soon. And I know this also, that when the two guest-children of the lowly street had gone home happy to their beds, that when Mary was sleeping in the soft country near to Agatha's new home, a shining Presence carrying a little child knocked at Agatha's door, and asked for her, and when she came the tender Presence gave to her a little ill-used circus-child to care for, with rich reward of money for the child's maintenance, and many words of tenderness for Agatha. And then the Child returned to little Mary, and laid down by her.

Quite well the Child knew that soon would dawn the last earthly day of his strange pilgrimage, that in this shining week of unsullied weather he had lost no opportunity to better the lot of little children. And yet now, and at this eleventh hour, the sense of his impotence weighed heavily upon him. He saw (or seemed to see) that he could not touch even ever so lightly the outermost hem of the garment of Mercy, that the task was too great, the ignorance too far-reaching, the unthinking wrong too deeply set in the customs of mankind. He realised, at last, that his celestial discontent was an unwarranted thing, that he had better leave it all to God. And yet God had given him, for his second Pilgrimage, that higher form of healing which Christ had, and which we call "a miracle." To him had been granted the foreshortening of the slow learning of centuries focussed into results which

anticipated, by divine aid, all present human knowledge. But mere healing he found was not necessarily betterment. And then at his feet he saw the daisy growing, and he knew at once the panacea of patience, and the value of restraint, and the harmonious ends of waiting, saving Time. And the earth seemed to him his place no more. A higher School of Divinity was what he needed now—a greater, vaster and more humble understanding. And then, and at once, he realised that Death was only an interval between what has been, and what shall be—that grief and despair have no true place in that transitional journey to “fresh fields and pastures new,” that the retrospective regret is a reflection upon heavenly joy, and that the one opportunity which is given to all is the one and only test of the deserving of beatitude. And he knew and saw—with the keen insight of that double knowledge that he had—that for all things there was a divine form of compensation—that the divine judgment of human judgment often reversed that judgment—that the simplicity of a child was the only preparation for higher wisdom, and that those who perverted or betrayed or besmirched that simplicity harmed not more the child they distorted than themselves by putting back for them the very alphabet of true understanding.

And as the Child lay there facing the stars, gleaning from the far lands of distant infinity the infinite realisation of what he partly knew, he heard little Mary in her sleep saying her evening prayer. And he listened hard to it so that he should not fail in a word, and then said to himself, “Yea, yea, it is our common language—that knits us all—angels with mankind—mankind with the angels—it is the guiding thread in the maze that never fails.”

And as the Child fell back among the flowers fast, fast asleep, behold a lonely Wayfarer was ascending the hill. And as He

## THE CHILD-HEALER.

reached the children sleeping there and fixed upon them His compassionate eyes, it seemed as if the whole Pity of the whole world were concentrated in His glance as He murmured—"Both so human, each so divine. And the Divine walks the earth as I walk it, and the human knows it not."

And then that lonely Wayfarer kissed little Mary's eyes, and passed onward to the sleeping village below. And as he moved down the hill the song of the nightingale pulsed from the woods, and the evening star appeared.



## CHAPTER VII.

---

### FLIGHT.

And while little Mary still slept peacefully the Child wandered afar across the grassy slopes of the hill, and fed his eyes on river and champaign. It was the last earthly dawn that would ever meet, in the cycles of Time, his eternity-fed vision. He saw it as a beautiful revelation, but it was (with all its light-laved possibilities) a measure of shadow in comparison to the Light his purified eyes had once beheld, and would so soon behold again. And, although he loved his old humankind with a deep and far-reaching love, he felt that he was more than merely joyous to know that the last earthly day had dawned for him. And yet the awaking instincts of the awakening world attracted and even entranced him. He looked down on the human habitations of so many creeds with a tolerant and love-girdling pity that the fret of infinite details of difference should part them so. He saw the earnestness of endeavour, and the assurance of unconceding righteousness in all their attempts to assert their own, as, for each and all, the best, and if he smiled his smile was notwithstanding saddened by the imminence of tears. And, as he gazed and listened, the early church-bells began to tinkle in the ear of Morn ! And there beneath him in the throbbing and revivifying haze was the mighty muttering moan of the greatest city that old Time had ever known or seen. And here enwrapped with the sleep of the innocent was a tiny human child, seed-sown in the furrows of the Hours to become of the harvest of the days-to-be. And if the sower should not cherish the seed, how then ?

And Mary woke on the instant, and cried : “Goldenhair I *is* so hungry.” And he fed her, and petted her, and sang to her, and

she grew glorious under the influence of his glorious smile. And the sun rose higher, and the stars paled down, and the haze grew luminous, and the Day moved on in triumph from beside its cradle of light in the eternal East. Yes: it was Sunday morning—that interval-day when Life thinks, and Labour wonders, and Rest is linked with Praise! And they moved down to the lower road, and Mary looked up to him and said: “I tan’t make meself out. My clothes is *so* bootiful—all new they is, and though I’s been asleep all night I’m clean as a noo pin.”

And the Child replied, “Yes, darling, you are sweet.”

And the little one put her tiny arm half round his wrist, and said to him, “Somehow I knows you are goin’ away to-night—I wish you’d take me too—and take dad and mother, and find Agatha and take her, and let’s all go out of this bustle, and this dirty city down here.”

But the Child only smiled, and said: “Not just yet, dear, there is a little bit of waiting to do, and a few preparations must be made before you can go there.” At which little Mary half-pouted, and half-cried.

And at the bottom of the hill who should they see waiting for them but Tuppenny, dressed likewise in strangely beautiful, though simple raiment; and soon he was hugging the Child, and kissing Mary, and had hold of the Child’s other hand. And they made a pretty picture, those three, as thought the shrouded solitary Figure they passed by unknowingly—the same who had looked at the Child and little Mary while they slept last night—and whose tender, beautiful, merciful eyes softened to tears as he beheld them passing by him to fulfil the loving pleasures of the Child’s last day upon earth. But the children babbled on either side of the Child as though he were twain, and each ear of his could hold and command a separate consciousness.



And as they moved along the common highway, when they had reached it, the kindling eyes of the Child became the mirror of a divine Impressionist who absorbed and ingathered all the chiaroscuro of that common and ordinary street. He saw indeed the pathos that indwelt in common things! And the children at his side were the quaint interpreters of each incident of that memorable morn; they supplied the language of custom as to what they knew which gave to his vision the special faculty of understanding. And so he realised that even his intuition lacked some complementary knowledge, and it, in a measure, humbled him to know it. But the babble of the little human children never ceased for one instant. They took from the face of morn the mask of night, and put that mask ruthlessly and almost disparagingly away. This was a new day; the night was gone; the hours were fresh and full of promise; the moments, little points of fire that were incandescent with hope. And yet the mystery of the Unknown was in their speech; they, like older children, realised that unexpressed conviction that the passing moment was the only perfect sense of fugitive joy. And out of each flowering moment, bee-like, they extracted the honey that was theirs to find and hold.

But the Child, do what he would, was sad. That human heart of his, that is and was the penalty and joy of all life, was not changed, nay, was hardly altered by the eternal paraphrase of its old melody into a newer theme. Still there was the ache in it for all he had been unable to accomplish. Yet was there the sober sense of some kind of disappointment that the Hours were beating towards the death-fringe of this mortal sea, and that he, the Pilot, had been able to explore so little that was really new. And Tuppenny heard him say:—"The hours beat on—yes—and the work remains unfinished! So it will be to the end of Time." And Tuppenny

wondered, and looked at little Mary, who looked up at the Child, and wondered too.

But then the Child shook himself free of his solemnity, and became himself as the little ones by his side. And they were joyous once more, and moved again on feet-pinions, as it were, without halting or weariness. And by and bye, they came to the Foundling Hospital, and all three went into the Church, and, when the singing began, the Child's voice pealed up to the very heaven of heavens (or so it seemed to little Mary), and led, as it were, that marvellous concourse of singing children of whom his presence and his understanding made him electrically and entirely one. But Mary and Tuppenny did not sing; they only listened; their ears were so satisfied with the beauty of their comrade's singing, that they could only hearken, in dumb adoration, as it seemed to them.

And then he took them into a garden that he found close by—but how he found it, or knew of it, they could not tell you even to-day, though Tuppenny has tried to find it again often and often—and there he gave them food—beautiful food as they thought—and breaking bread said grace with them. And they ate of the good things till they were satisfied, and then he gave them sleep. And when they awoke it was quite evening, and they found Tuppenny's home at last, and the Child talked to Tuppenny's mother, and blessed her, and left behind him money for Tuppenny's use, and then kissed dear Tuppenny fondly and reverently, and when he looked back, after leaving him, Tuppenny was still standing at the door shading his eyes with his left hand, and waving his right hand to them, and his voice saying—"Good-bye, my Goldenhair," fell soft and soothing on the Child's ear.

"I shall allays love Tuppenny for 'oor sake," little Mary said.

And the Child replied to her, "Yes, dear; and I shall know and

love you that you love him. Poor Tuppenny has not a very happy home, and you must always look after him a little."

"So I will," little Mary answered; "and so will mudder, and so will P'liceman dad."

"Then," the Child answered, "if P'liceman dad helps us, Tuppenny will always have a friend! Now let me carry you sweet-heart," he went on, "for little legs are tired I think." And soon she was nestling fast in his enfolding arms, and looking up happily into his face.

\* \* \* \*

And at twelve minutes to twelve that night Constable Porson from his coign of vantage on the Lambeth side, saw the Child, carrying little Mary, coming towards him from the Westminster side of Westminster Bridge. And looking behind him he espied Mary's mother also coming to what (to her and him) was the sad meeting-place, and Constable Porson felt the solitude of bereavement descending on his honest soul. But the Child came on, like Fate, without hesitancy, without hurry, with all assurance of intent, with all gentleness of the Inevitable.

And kissing little Mary, he put her—ever so tenderly—in the arms of her fond but tearful earthly mother, and then silence fell between them till at last poor, straightforward Constable Porson could bear the strain no longer, and he said: "I know, sir, this is good-bye. We both know it—we all know it—and God knows I don't feel I can say the words, or think of life without you *in* that life. Who you are I cannot say, and what you have been to us I cannot say either. You have been gentleness and hope, strength and tenderness, God and man in one to me and mine—" And then, poor fellow, he choked, and could say no more, but Mary's mother added, "No woman ever had such a friend—no child ever had such a protector—no poor lost soul ever found such a Comforter.

And then the Child's voice was heard by them both for the last time, and these were the words he spoke: "I had a commission given me to fulfil by One whose Word is the Law of the world. I sought a poor man's home as my abode, and found there kindness, and a gentle welcome, found there too the simple Faith so dear to Our Father. And it was my privilege to give health back to a dear child, and through her need to enter by that tiny wicket-gate the kingdom of Little Children. And what I have been to you all I have tried to be to them, not because I am powerful or mighty, but because I try faithfully to fulfil the duty and design that are given me to do and make perfect. And I say unto you as my last words, as the message that I brought to guide my feet, as the creed that I leave you to direct your lives, try to understand the children you attempt to rear, and wish to teach; know how credulous, how believing they are, and how their innocence resents false speaking or false words. Teach them to be kind by letting them know kindness. Leave the fire, and the wrath, and the savagery out of your creeds; leave in the Love, that passeth all understanding. The rest will come where the heavenly roses bloom, peace will ensue where the labourers in the Vineyard all are full of that peace, and in the shelter of the kingdom of God will be at last the reward for all suffering and sorrow here."

And then the Child flung one arm round Mrs. Porson's neck, and as Constable Porson grasped the other hand of the Child it seemed to him that a falling star had blinded him for an instant; and as he glanced down the street he saw his good wife with bowed head carrying little Mary home; and he heard across the bridge a soft song rising and falling with the cadence of unrememberable words, but strain his eyes as he might he could not see the Singer.

And just then the shrouded Figure that we know of passed him by, and poor Constable Porson bent his honest head in his trembling

## THE CHILD-HEALER.

51.

hands, and as a tender voice—in passing—said: “All’s well,”  
Constable Porson answered, “Yes—yes—all’s well; thank God.”

THE END.



